



PHEASANT AND QUAIL COOPERATORS EARLY SEASON REPORT

Early season reports from pheasant cooperators allow biologists to quickly assess hunter success and local field conditions across Michigan's Lower Peninsula (Zones 2 and 3) at the beginning of the pheasant season. This report summarizes their responses for October 20-23, 2006. Generally, the 2006 season appears to be similar to last year.

Cooperators returned 62 surveys and hunted 290 hours in 23 counties during the survey period. Fewer cooperators returned early season reports in 2006 than in 2005 (Table 1). Hunting effort was highest in the thumb area of the state during the first three days (Table 2).

Most respondents (53%) thought pheasant populations were down from last year in the areas they hunted, with 36% reporting populations the same or slightly down from last year (Table 3).

Hunters commented that the weather was cool during the season opener, with wet and windy conditions in most areas. Many noted that standing crops may have contributed to low success, while others indicated that cover was "good" or "excellent". Comments on pheasant numbers ranged from "nice bunch of birds" to "no birds." Some hunters mentioned observing "no young birds." These comments are similar to those in recent years, indicating pheasant numbers and habitat are unevenly distributed in Michigan.

Table 1. Rooster and hen flush rates by zone and year for October 20 - 23.

Zone	2005			2006		
	Hours	Roosters / hour	Hens / hour	Hours	Roosters / hour	Hens / hour
2	2.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
3	623.4	0.9	1.0	290.0	0.7	0.9
Statewide	625.9	0.9	1.0	290.0	0.7	0.9

Table 2. Pheasant flush rates by county for October 20-23, 2006.

County:	Hours:	Roosters / hour:	Hens / hour:
Allegan	19	0.4	0.6
Barry	4	0.8	3.0
Berrien	4	1.0	1.3
Branch	4	0.0	0.0
Calhoun	7	0.0	0.7
Clinton	7	0.9	0.4
Eaton	5	1.6	2.0
Genesee	7	0.1	0.0
Gratiot	9	0.0	0.2
Hillsdale	15	0.7	1.3
Huron	44	0.5	0.8
Ingham	2	1.3	2.2
Isabella	5	1.8	0.0
Jackson	6	0.8	1.5
Lenawee	39	0.8	1.1
Mecosta	9	0.0	0.2
Midland	4	0.0	0.3
Montcalm	25	0.2	0.4
Ottawa	5	0.2	0.4
St. Clair	20	0.2	0.7
Sanilac	22	0.6	0.8
Shiawassee	5	0.4	0.4
Tuscola	25	2.5	2.0

Table 3. Hunter opinions about pheasant populations.

Trend	2005	2006
Up	8%	9%
Slightly Up	5%	2%
Same	16%	23%
Slightly Down	10%	13%
Down	61%	53%

